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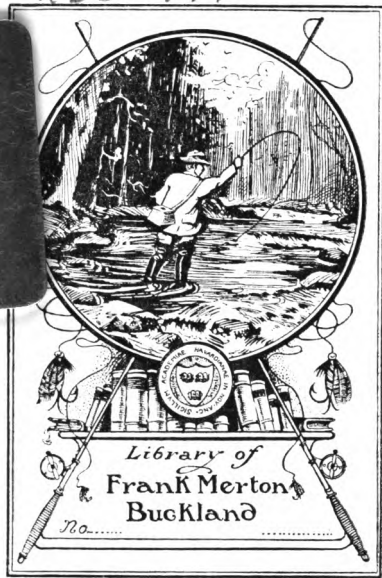
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THE CHRISTMAS THORN



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THE CHRISTMAS THORN.

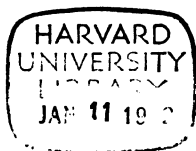
BY
LOUISE STOCKTON.

And other stories.



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THE CHRISTMAS THORN.

IN the December of 1752, Roger Lippett was a boy of ten years, and "Dan," his dog, was six months old and had to be taught to swim. To this pleasing duty Roger addressed himself whenever he had a chance, and the only draw-back was that his mother would allow no wet dog upon her sanded floor, and as Roger had to be wherever Dan was, he had often a tedious time in waiting for such a very curly dog to get dry.

But this Sunday afternoon the two had taken a long walk after the swim, and when they came back Dan was dry and uncommonly clean and white.

In the little parlor Roger found the usual Sunday company. In an arm-chair on one side of the fire-

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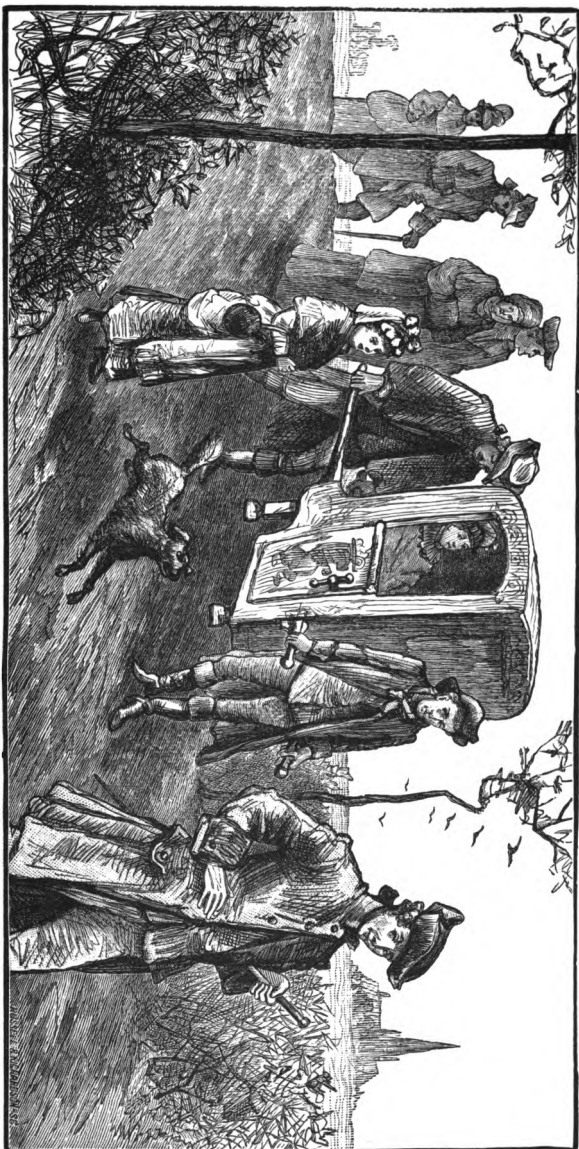
place sat Simon Mitchels, the school-master ; opposite to him, on a three-legged stool, was Caleb Dawe, the parish clerk, and on the settle, in front of the fire, was Roger's cousin, old Forbes the miller, and short Daniel Green, the sexton. His mother sat in her high-backed chair by the window, and Phœbe Rogers' younger sister was near her playing gleefully with a kitten.

"Christmas !" said Caleb ; "there 'll be no Christmas ! What between the New Way and the Old Way, we 'll all go astray. It is a popish innovation at the best, and if King George knew his duty, he'd put his foot on it."

"Nonsense !" said Simon, testily ; "when a thing is wrong, 'tis wrong, and if you mean to make it right, you must not mind a little temporary trouble. King George knows that just as well as any one, and so do you ! If you wanted a new roof on your house you would first have to take the old one off."

"Not Caleb," said old Forbes. "Caleb 'd patch the old one until it was new-made over."

"Yes," replied Simon, "that is just what we have been doing with the year — patching and patching. Now here comes King George, and says, 'Look here, this is 1752, and if we are ever going to have a decent regular year with the proper number of days in it,



ON THE WAY TO THE BLOOMING.

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'tis time we were about it.' But you people who patch roofs object because it alters the dates for one year a day or two. Thanks be to the King, however he has the power."

"Alters the dates a day or two!" repeated Caleb. "You yourself said the New Way would take eleven days out of the year."

"Only this year," Simon replied; "afterward it will be all right. It is but to bring the first of January in the right place."

"It was right enough," persisted Caleb. "And I say no one, king or no king, has any right to take eleven days away from the English people."

Then Mistress Margery Lippett spoke:

"For my part," she said, "I think the New Way unchristian. Mistress Duncan, you know, has a fine crowing little boy, and when the squire asked how old he was, she told him — 'twas but a day so ago — three months and two weeks; and he laughed, and told her she would have to take the two weeks off. Now *that* I call unchristian, and not dealing justly with the child."

At this the school-master laughed, and taking his pipe out of his mouth, and pushing his velvet skull-cap a little farther back, he replied:

"They were both right, Mistress Margery. Both

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of them. The mother counts by weeks — very good — the squire by the proper calendar. One makes the child three months and two weeks, and she is right ; the other deducts eleven days to fit the calendar, and he, too, is right."

"Out with it," cried Caleb ; "out with such a calendar ! Why, the whole realm will be in confusion. None of us will ever know how old we are, or when the church-days are due ; but I doubt if, in spite of it all, the Pope's new calendar doesn't keep the squire's rent-day straight. They'll look out for that."

"I suppose," said Simon, "you all think the year was created when the world was ?"

"Of course it was," said Mistress Margery ; "didn't He make the day and the night, and do you suppose He would have passed the year over ?"

"You are about right," said Simon ; "but the trouble is we are just finding out what His year is ? See here, Roger," and he turned his head to the boy, "do you know how many different kinds of years we can reckon ?"

"Not I, master," said Roger.

"Well, I'll tell you. Suppose you wanted a measure of time answering to a year, you might reckon from the time the apples blow to when they blow

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again, but if a frost or a blight seize them, you'd be out with your count, wouldn't you?"

"Truly," said Mistress Margery, who delighted to see how well Roger understood his learned master.

"Well, then," resumed the teacher, "you would soon find that if you wanted a regular, unchangeable guide, one unaffected by seasons, by droughts, heats, or hostile winds, you would look to the skies. You would, perhaps, if you were wise enough, and had observed—you would single out some special star; you would take close notice of its position, note its changes, then you would say, 'When that comes back to the very spot where it was when I began to watch it, that time I shall count as my year.' Do you follow me?"

"That I do," said Roger.

"That, then, is one way in which a year was once calculated, and the star chosen gave three hundred and sixty-five days for a year."

"Now that is a calendar, true and unchangeable, and correct beyond what a Pope can make," said Caleb.

"That, Roger," said Simon, taking no notice of Caleb, "is called a Sidereal year. Now, come you here, Phœbe, and tell me what is a Lunar year?"

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"A year of moons," said Phœbe, her bright eyes dancing.

"You have the making of a scholar in you," said Simon ; "'tis a pity you are a girl. A Lunar year *is* a year of twelve moons. This Lunar year has but three hundred and fifty-four days, still it served the purposes of the Chaldeans, the Persians, and Jews.

"Then there was the Solar year, calculated by the sun ; and it and the Lunar year agreed so badly that every three years another lunar month had to be counted in to keep the one from running away from the other. Now, I suppose you all think," looking at the group around the fireside, "that all these years began the first of January and ended the thirty-first of December ?"

"It is but just that they should," said old Forbes, Caleb disdaining to speak.

"But *they didn't*," said Simon. "The Jews began their year in March ; in Greece it began in June, and certain Eastern Christians began theirs in August."

"That isn't England," said Caleb, in a tone of contempt.

"Truly not," said Simon ; "but the English year used to begin the twenty-fifth of December, until the coronation of William the Conqueror — when was that, Phœbe ?"

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"In 1066," said Phœbe, smoothing her teacher's ruffles with the air of a petted and privileged child.

"It was January the first, 1066," resumed Simon; "and it was judged so important an event that it was ordered that ever after *the year should begin on that day*. But I can tell you worse than that of England. There are places in England to-day, where they reckon their year from the twenty-fifth of March!

"But long before William's time," he continued, "the Romans had ideas, and they thought it wise to straighten up the year for their own use. So Julius Cæsar — when did he begin to reign, Phœbe?"

"I don't know," said she.

"In 63, B. C." said Roger, eagerly.

"No, that was Cæsar Augustus, and we are coming to him. Julius Cæsar lived before that, and he arranged the years so that all the even numbers among the months, except February, had thirty days, and all the odd ones thirty-one. Do you understand that?"

"Not I," said Phœbe, frankly.

"January is the first month; it is not an even number?"

"No," said Phœbe.

"March is the third month, and so is not an even number?"

"No," said Phœbe again.

The Christmas Thorn.

"They each then, being odd, had thirty-one days, while May and July, and the other even months, except February, had thirty days. That was all very easy, and the length of the year seemed settled ; but when Cæsar Augustus came on the throne he was not satisfied. 'What,' said he, 'shall Julius Cæsar in his month of July have thirty-one days, and I, in my month of August, have but thirty !' And so he at once made August longer."

"He was very foolish," said Phœbe. "I was born in February, wasn't I, mother ? and I don't care because Roger was born in December, when there are more days."

"But you are not a Cæsar," replied her teacher. "At any rate this Cæsar made the year all wrong again ; and in 1582 Gregory, who was Pope, set to work to help matters. He had to drop some days, I believe, in the first year just as we are going to now. The French and Italian people, and some others, were wise enough to see this improvement at once, and they adopted Pope Gregory's year ; but we, for nearly two hundred years more, have been getting along with the old way, and our new year comes ahead of almost everybody else's, and those who travel get their dates badly mixed."

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"Surely," said Roger, "it *would* be best to have the same year the world over."

"So King George thinks," said Simon ; "but Caleb here says not, and quarrels because eleven days have to be dropped out of this one year, so that for all aftertime the years, months, and days, will go on in an even, regular and seemly manner."

"And I rightly object," replied Caleb ; "and when the proper Christmas-day comes I shall keep it, and no king, no pope, and no Julius Cæsar, *nobody*, shall ever make me change the blessed day for any other falsely called by its name." And Caleb put his hands to his three-legged stool, and lifting it and himself at the same moment, brought it down with a bang.

"Well, we can't go wrong about Christmas-day," said Mistress Margery, "if we but follow the blooming of the Glastonbury Thorn."

"That we cannot," answered old Forbes. "For hundreds and hundreds of years, long before popes or calendars were thought of, that Thorn has bloomed every Christmas Eve, and not only the one at Glastonbury, but every sacred slip cut from it and planted has remembered the birthday of The Child *and never failed to blossom !*"

"That is all superstition," said Simon ; "the plant

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naturally blossoms twice a year—that is all.”

“Indeed that is not all,” cried Mistress Margery. “I was born and raised at Quainton, but seven miles from here, and there, as you all know, is a fine tree grown from a Glastonbury slip, and many’s the time when, with the whole village, have I gone out to see the blooming.”

“And when did it bloom, mother?” asked Phœbe.

“Always on Christmas Eve. The blossoms were snow white, and by Christmas night they were gone.”

“But, mother,” said Roger, “why is the Glastonbury tree the best, if this at Quainton blooms as well?”

“Because it was the first one planted, of course,” said Mistress Margery; “I know no other reason.”

Phœbe saw the little smile upon Simon’s face, and taking his coat lappets in both hands, she bent her pretty little head in front of his, and said :

“Tell us, master.”

“You think,” he answered, “that I must know all the old wives’ stories? Well, I will tell you this one. ‘Joseph of Arimathea, you know, gave his sepulchre to receive the body of the Lord. Into it the blessed angels went, and out from it, upon the third day, came the Risen Saviour. From that hour, until the one in which he saw the Lord return unto the skies,

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Joseph followed Him, and then all Palestine became to him empty and weary. There were people who doubted the resurrection ; people who said that Joseph himself was one who aided in a deception ; and so, tired of it all, he took his staff in hand and wandered until he came to England, and to Glastonbury. On Christmas-day he climbed the hill where the old, old church now stands, and here, in sign that his wanderings were over, he planted his staff. At once it rooted, it shot forth leaves, it blossomed, and the scent of the milk-white flowers filled the air. From that time to the days when Charles and Cromwell fought, it has blossomed on Christmas Eve ; but then it was cut down by some impious hand, yet still all the slips, the twigs, which had been cut off by pilgrims, have kept the sacred birthday ; and as your mother says, the one in Quainton can as well as the other decide between the Old calendar and the New."

"I am glad to hear thee say so," exclaimed Mistress Margery, with brightening eyes, "and if you choose to journey with us when next we go to Quainton, you are heartily welcome to our company, and I'll bespeak thee a honest welcome from my sister who, like my Phœbe here, has a strong leaning toward learning."

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"Nay," said the school-master, looking a little ashamed of himself ; " I but told the story to amuse the child. The plant is merely a sort of hawthorn from Aleppo, and regularly blooms twice in the year, if the weather be but mild."

But although Mistress Margery was much disappointed that he had no desire to go to Quainton, she found both Roger and Phœbe bent upon witnessing the Christmas blooming.

" I don't know," said she, lightly, "but that between the Old Way, and the New, the Thorn will be confused, and not know when it should bloom."

" It will not bloom on your new Christmas, take my word for that," said Forbes ; " and if the children will wait until the true day comes, I myself will take them along, for I have a mind to see it myself."

" But, cousin Forbes," said Phœbe, " it *may* bloom on the new day."

The little people had their way. On the morning of the twenty-fourth of December, by the New Style, but the thirteenth by Caleb's count, Roger and Phœbe started off, mounted on their mother's own steady white horse, Phœbe behind her brother, with the bag containing their holiday clothes, while to Roger was given their lunch, and a bottle of black-

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berry wine for their aunt, with whom they were to lodge in Quainton.

The morning was cold and bleak, but the children rode merrily on. It was the first time they had been trusted alone on such an expedition, and Phœbe at once proposed that they should play that Roger was a wandering knight, and she one of the fair, distressed damsels who were always met by knights when on their travels.

"I would," said Roger, "if you could find another knight to whom I could give battle, but it is rather tame to be pacing along here with you behind me, and no danger ahead."

"I wish then," said Phœbe, "that mother had not wanted cousin Forbes' horse, for, perhaps, he would have lent it to us, and then, with such a horse, we could have been a knight and a lady out hawking, and I would have given you a race."

"That would have been a rarely good plan," said Roger, looking up the level road, "and I do not like to lose it. Ho, lady," he cried, looking behind him, "thy father is in pursuit!" And clapping both feet to the sides of the horse, he put him to his speed.

"Oh, Roger! oh, sir Knight!" exclaimed Phœbe, "my hood — if I could but tie it!"

"I cannot wait for hoods," said the knight, in a

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stern voice ; "when we reach my castle thou shalt have twenty-two, and a crown beside."

The lady would not have doubted this for the world, but she nevertheless loosened one hand, clinging desperately to her protector with the other, and pulled off the hood, held it, and clutched her knight who, with cries of "on Selim, on!" urged poor old Dobbin to his best.

There was, indeed, a clatter of horses' hoofs behind, and with it a loud cry, Phœbe turned her head.

"Oh, sir Knight!" she cried with very short breath ; "my father *is* near at hand! Hasten, oh, hasten!"

And sure enough, some one was! He was short and stout, and looked much more like a butcher's boy than a gentle lady's father ; and he was certainly in pursuit, and he called again and again, but the only effect was to make the flying knight more vigorously kick the sides of his horse, and more vehemently push on. But as fortune would have it the father's horse was the swiftest, and in spite of the knight's best efforts he was down along-side.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed, "by racing off in this way! If I didn't know that was Mistress Margery Lippett's horse I would have let you go on.



ON THE ROAD ONCE MORE.

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seeing that you haven't sense enough to know he has lost a shoe."

At this Roger quickly stopped his steed.

"Which one?" he exclaimed — "Here Phœbe, I must get down — the hind foot shoe is gone."

"Oh, Roger," cried Phœbe, "what would mother say! She is so careful of Dobbin, and she charged us to take heed of him; and Roger, *must* we go home, do you think?"

"Of course not," replied Roger, "and see here Dick," for he now recognized his pursuer, "cannot you tell me where to find a blacksmith?"

"There is one at Torrey," said Dick, "a mile down that road. It is the nearest place, but it will take you out of your way, if you are going to the Blooming as am I, who must be off, or my master will take my ears in pay for my tarrying."

It was easy enough to find the blacksmith's shop, but the blacksmith was not there, although he would soon be back, his wife said. Roger tied his horse, and then he and Phœbe wandered about until he declared it was lunch time; so they came back, and were about to eat their lunch by the stile, when the smith's wife saw them, and calling them into her kitchen, spread a table for them, and added a cold pie and some milk to their repast.

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But still the man did not come, and Roger waited in great impatience. He was almost ready to start off again for Quainton, but Phœbe was so sure that the penalty of injuring Dobbin would be the never trusting of them alone again, that he was afraid to risk it. Then there came a man with two horses to be shod, and he waited and scolded and stamped his feet, and then the blacksmith came, but he at once attended to the man, and so Dobbin had to wait. But at last Dobbin was shod, and Roger mounted, and then the blacksmith lifted Phœbe up.

"Where are you going?" said the smith.

"To Quainton," replied Roger; "we are going to see the Blooming."

"Why, so are we," said the man. "It is late for you children to be on the road. If I had known all this I would have shod your horse first. You had better wait for us."

"Oh, no," replied Phœbe, "we have first to go to our aunt's. It would frighten her greatly to have us come so late."

Roger looked down the road. It was certainly late in the afternoon, but the road was direct, and so he said good-by, and off old Dobbin trotted.

It now seemed as if the mile out of the way had stretched itself to two, and it was fast growing dark

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when they reached a mile-stone three miles from Quainton. Little Phœbe was certain they should be lost riding on in the dark ; but not so Roger.

“There is no fear of that,” said he stoutly, “we will meet others going.”

And Roger was right. The nearer they got to Quainton the greater became the throng of people, and they were one and all going to the Blooming.

They came from the lanes, from over the fields, out of every hamlet, from every road. They were in wagons ; they were on foot and on horse-back ; two old ladies were in a sedan-chair, and at last they overtook an old man carried like “a lady to London,” by two great sons. As it grew dark and darker, and no stars came out to brighten the sky, wandering lights began to shine forth and torches, candles, lanterns, gleamed out on the roadside and flickered in the bushes and among the trees. There was in every group much talking and discussion ; and it was easy to be seen that most of the people were of Caleb’s opinion, and doubted the new way of arranging the year ; but it was equally clear that they meant the slip from the Glastonbury thorn to decide the matter for them.

Roger kept close behind a travelling-carriage which was attended by two horsemen carrying torches, and

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greatly to his joy it went into Quainton and passed directly by his aunt's home.

"There is no use in stopping," cried Phœbe, as the house came in sight, "it is all shut up and dark, and aunt Katherine has surely gone with the others."

This was so likely to be the case that Roger urged on his horse, and again overtook the carriage. When they reached the field in which the Thorn-tree stood it was already filled with flickering, moving lights, and was all astir with people and voices.

Roger jumped down, lifted Phœbe, and then tying Dobbin to an oak sapling which still rustled with dried and brown leaves, he turned to his sister and, hand in hand, they hastened to where the Thorn was growing, and around which stood a large group.

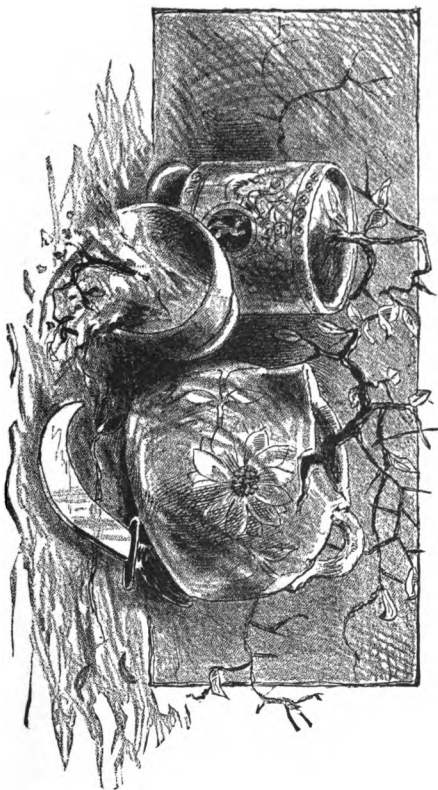
The tree was bare, leafless, and looked as if dead.

"If that blooms to-night," said a woman, "'twill be a miracle."

"It is always a miracle," said a grave and sober-looking man by her side.

Phœbe held closely to her brother's hand ; but the scene was too wonderful to promise much talking on her part. The darkness, the dim and shadowy trees and bushes, the tramping of unseen horses, the confusion of voices, the laughing and complaining of children, the moving lights, the thronging people,

THEY NEVER BLOOMED!



The Christmas Thorn.

and in the centre of it all a ring of light and a dense group around the tree, made a wonderful picture.

Nearer and nearer the people pressed, the parish beadle in advance, with his watch in his hand, a man by his side swinging his lantern so that the light would fall directly upon it. Many eyes were bent on it.

It grew late, and the crowd became silent, gathering closer around the tree.

"Twenty minutes of twelve — a quarter of twelve — five minutes of twelve!" proclaimed the beadle.

The tree was still bare, and gave no signs of bloom.

"Twelve o'clock!"

And off in the distance pealed the bells, ushering in King George's Christmas.

The torches flared upon the tree; the people in the rear of the crowd stood on tiptoe and craned their necks to see the milk-white bloom.

But the tree was silent and bare!

King George could not be right.

The next day aunt Katherine came out of the room where she was putting her bed-linen away in the lavender-scented press.

"The church-bells have done ringing," she said.

"Run, children, and see if any one has gone."

Off flew Phœbe with Roger after her, and when she reached the church-yard, the only person she

The Christmas Thorn.

saw was Marian Leesh, a neighbor's child, looking over the wall at the minister and the clerk who were standing by the door. When the clergyman saw Phœbe he came toward her.

"Child," he said, "what is the meaning of this? Is it possible that the people refuse to keep the Christmas-day? Where is your family?"

"We do not belong here," said Phœbe; "we came to see the Blooming. We are at aunt Katherine's, and she is looking over her linen press."

The minister frowned.

"And the rest of the people?"

"They are all at work," cried Roger, coming up; "the cooper has his shop open, and the mercer is selling, and they have all put away the cakes and the mistletoe, and there is to be no Christmas until the true day comes.

"Nonsense!" cried the minister. "Jacob, bring me my hat!" and without taking off his gown he strode down into the village.

But it was all in vain; the minister talked and scolded, but the people went on with their work. They would not go to church; they would not sing their carols nor hang holly and mistletoe boughs.

"This New Way might do for lords and ladies," they said, "but as for them the Christmas kept by

The Christmas Thorn.

their fathers, and marked by the blooming of the Thorn, was their Christmas," and so the sexton closed the church, and the discomfited minister went home; and he was the only person in Quainton who that day ate a Christmas dinner.

When the news came to London and to the court of how these people, and others in different villages, refused to adopt the New Style, the little fat king and his lords and ladies laughed; but they soon found it was a serious matter, and so it was ordered that the churches should be opened also on "old Christmas" and sermons preached on that day wherever the people wished them. And thus it was that our sixth of January, known as "Twelfth Night," "little," or "old Christmas," came to be a holiday.

But Roger and Phœbe spent one year of their lives without a Christmas. They returned home upon the twenty-sixth, and found that there the New Christmas had been kept; and as they could not go back to Quainton when the Old Christmas came, they missed it altogether.

As for the Thorn-tree! Who can tell whether it still blooms? In the chronicles which tell of the Glastonbury bush, and of the Quainton excitement, there is no mention made of its after blooming; and the chances are Phœbe's mother was a true prophet

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when she said it was possible that between the Old Style and the New Style the Thorn would become confused and bloom no more for any Christmas-day.

A Remarkable Journey.

A REMARKABLE JOURNEY.

TWO little ladies were going to France, and the old sleigh had been repaired for the purpose of conveying them thither. Not that there was any snow upon the ground in June — not that the ocean had been bridged for their special benefit — not at all — yet they were certainly going, this lovely summer day, all the way to France in that dingy old pung-sleigh.

One of these young ladies was a dark little elf, with black eyes full of fun ; the other was a blonde fairy, whose blue eyes sparkled with mischief. The first was Madame Estella Adora Isabella Irene Jubette ; the other was Lady Myrtle Willow.

Now it must be confessed that there were occasions when they were addressed by very different appellations ; but just at present they had changed their personality, and were the happy possessors of these romantic titles. It must also be acknowledged that these high-born dames had very independent

A Remarkable Journey.

notions as to what constituted a voyage to France, and what were suitable costumes for such a journey.

The sleigh was under a shed in the back yard, standing with its shafts turned up against the wall, and was half full of hay. The horse, a handsome white charger, was wholly invisible to ordinary eyes ; but his two mistresses could plainly see him pawing and prancing as if impatient to be off. One of the ladies wore a court-train, which looked suspiciously as if it were made of calico and tied by strings around her waist ; while the other was sweetly beautiful in a short costume, looped with bows of yellow flannel.

The repairing of the sleigh consisted in pushing the hay to one end, and placing across its sides an elegant and luxurious seat made of a white pine board.

“If we should happen to want to go to sleep,” (which was very likely on such a long journey) “we can lie down on the hay,” remarked Lady Myrtle Willow to her stately friend.

When all preparations were completed the ladies climbed into the sleigh, whipped up their horse, and started with great hubbub, to the admiration of all beholders.

Wildly reared and plunged the foaming steed ;

IN REALITY.



A Remarkable Journey.

swift flew the sleigh with its precious load; over mountains and hills, down valleys and dells, through cities and villages. Lady Myrtle Willow lavishly distributed gold and silver to the beggars on the way; but Madame Estella Adora Isabella Irene Jubette disdainfully curled her aristocratic lips and refused to countenance them in the least.

How exciting it was! On, on, on they flew! The young ladies screeched and screamed with delight, and bounced up and down in their joy over the beautiful scenery spread out on either hand as far as the eye could reach. After a furious drive of about ten thousand miles, Madame Estella Isabella suddenly exclaimed:

“Now we are hungry and must have our dinner!”

Down they sat on their sleigh-chariot floor, one each side of the seat, which — O wonder! — instantly became an elegant marble table, loaded with all that appetite could desire; while the vehicle was as suddenly transformed into a magnificent restaurant.

“I’ll have some cream-cakes and an apple-turn-over,” said the Madame Estella Adora.

“I want some turkey and strawberries and cream,” said the mild Lady Myrtle.

“Hadn’t we both better take some pine-apples and

A Remarkable Journey.

oranges?" asked the madame, as she crammed an invisible cream-cake into her mouth.

"Yes, and a couple of tarts," suggested her companion.

After this substantial and satisfactory meal was dispatched, I am sorry to say that the fine ladies left the restaurant without the slightest notion of paying their bills, deserted their faithful steed, not so much as offering him a wisp of hay, and took passage in a row-boat for China, without having even touched at the shore of France.

"How the sea goes!" exclaimed the excited Madame Estella, frantically rowing with an invisible oar, and tipping wildly about until she nearly fell overboard.

"Frightfully!" cried Lady Myrtle Willow, in a joyous tone; then with a piercing shriek she pointed to a fearful pile of shingles, and cried despairingly:

"See that awful wave! We are surely going to be drowned! Help! Help!" Whereupon Lady Estella Adora Isabella lost all self-control, fainted dead away, and lay gasping in the bottom of the boat, until Lady Willow brought her to her senses by holding a piece of brick to her nose.

"Cheer up, your majesty! here is a light-house coming to save us!" said she, encouragingly.

IN FANCY.



A Remarkable Journey.

"No," objected Madame Estella, "it is a whale and we are to ride on its back."

There is so much resemblance between lighthouses and whales that my lady was not at all disconcerted by her mistake, but was proceeding to be shipwrecked in the highest style, when that ungrateful Madame Estella Adora Isabella Irene mounted astride the whale — which the ordinary observers would have called a saw-horse — and waving a majestic adieu, sailed away leaving her companion alone in mid-ocean.

It was now Lady Willow's turn to faint ; and, just as she had gotten herself nicely fainted, she was recalled violently to life by the sudden appearance upon the scene of a terrible monster, in the shape of a small boy, who shouted :

"Here, Em and Carrie ! if you don't come and set the table you can't have any dinner. Mother says so !"

In the twinkling of an eye the raging ocean was re-transformed into a rickety old shed, the up-turned bark into a dingy pung-sleigh, the whale into a saw-horse ; and two little girls, feeling cross and petulant at being interrupted in their play, slipping unwillingly into the places of the sweet Lady Myrtle Willow and the magnificent Madame Estella Adora.



FOLLY FRIVOLOUS.

A DOG'S DIARY.

MONDAY.—I was only playing with the baby's button-string, but she shook her head at me and said, "What a frivolous little dog!" and presently, as I was about to take a nap, she cried out, "Folly Frivolous, get off that cushion!"

I had stood being called Folly, but to be called "Folly Frivolous"! that was too much! I just pretended not to hear.

It didn't make any difference about the cushion, though, for she came and rolled me off; but I'm afraid that's to be my name—oh, dear! and I hoped they would call me Ponto.

It all came from that button-string.

I'm very fond of that button-string, and I'm such a little chap that I can't be thinking about rats all the

Folly Frivolous.

time. I don't often get hold of that button-string, for the baby is fond of it, too, and when I do get it she puts her hand right in my mouth and drags it out, and almost takes my teeth along with it ; but I never bite her, for I'm a good little doggie, if I am frivolous.

Tuesday. — Yes, that's to be my name. This time it wasn't the button-string, it was the baby's shoes. The baby is just learning to walk on two feet instead of four ; and when I see those little blue shoes start out across the floor, something seems to say to me, "Folly, go for 'em ! rats !" and I can't help flying at them, though the baby always tumbles down.

To-day she tumbled down hard, and my mistress she called out, "Folly, you scamp !" and then *she* went for *me* !

I thought it was to whip me, and I dived in under the chairs and tables, and I led her a chase, but she caught me at last.

She didn't whip me, but she stood me up on her lap, and looked at me — very solemn — and said, "O Folly Frivolous ! what a mischievous little dog it is !"

I dropped one ear and looked at her very solemn, too, for I didn't know what she might do next, and with that she laughed and we made friends.

Folly Frivolous.

Wednesday. — Got whipped to-day, though, sure !

I'm out in the coal-shed thinking it over (I've got a little place out here where I keep all the bones I get, and one or two other little things that nobody knows about).

I'd been sharpening my teeth ; I'd found something to gnaw that was softer than the baby's playthings, and I'd got my teeth very sharp ; and I thought, " If I could only see a rat, wouldn't I tackle him ! "

I looked behind all the doors and growled, but I didn't see any. Then I remembered that Pussy caught mice in the garret, and I said to myself, " I'll just take a look around up there, too ; " so I slipped out and started up stairs. But on the way I came upon a door that was open a little crack.

I couldn't pass that crack ; it seemed to say, " Put your nose in here, Folly ; " so I put my nose in, and somehow my body followed it and squeezed through.

(I wish my nose wouldn't lead me into so many scrapes.)

On the other side of the door was a bed, and on that bed lay the strangest-looking thing ! I said to myself at once, " rats ! " I wasn't quite sure, though, for I'd never seen any before, and I thought it might be something worse ; so I kept one foot through the door, and growled softly, but the thing didn't stir.

Folly Frivolous.

Then I growled a little louder ; and then I made a rush at it, and barked right and left.

The more I barked the more suspicious it looked, so I just jumped up and went at it with my teeth.

It took me some time, but at last I shook the life out of it, and was giving a few finishing growls when I heard somebody cry out, " Oh, my new winter bonnet ! You *naughty dog* ! DROP it ! "

My mistress had come through the crack, too. I caught sight of her, and saw by her eyes that she meant mischief.

I dropped it, and ran for my life ; but she was after me. I was so frightened I bumped my head twice before I got out the door (it aches yet). I tore down the stairs five steps at a time, then down the next flight and landed in a pail of water at the bottom. I didn't stay there long, but made straight for the dining-room, and crawled under the dresser.

There I took breath a little ; but I didn't feel safe — I knew she'd find me, — she always does.

She did. She came straight down after me, without going into the pail of water, and made for the dining-room, too, — gave one look under the dresser and stuck her hand in for me. But I made myself flat against the wall and she couldn't reach ; so she borrowed the cook's rolling-pin, and poked that under ; but I dodged.

Folly Frivolous.

Then the cook she took a broom and they went at it together. That was too much! I made a sudden dive out one side and should have got away after all, but just then I heard the master coming down stairs, calling out, "Where's that dog? he's gnawed up my new copy of Tennyson!" in a tone that made me shudder. I felt then it was no use; I gave right up; I knew I'd got to be whipped—and I was. I think they all three must have whipped me,—it feels as though they had. I'm out here on the coal-heap thinking it over.

Solemn times!

A week later.—That was a week ago. I'm all right now. No, I forgot, I'm all wrong; I don't get any more bones. I heard the master say to the mistress one day, "Folly is getting too fat; he must be put on low diet."

I didn't know what it meant then, but I've found out since; it means I'm to be starved.

I've gnawed on the old bones till they're about used up, and I've been on the lookout for a new one with a good deal of meat on it, but I don't get it. I don't get much of anything except a little bread and milk (milk!) cat's food, and a few scraps of gristle now and then.

Folly Frivolous.

I'm hungry all the time.

I keep around when the dinner is getting ready, and smell with all my might ; but the cook she just lets me take it out in smelling.

Two weeks later. — I'm lame.

The master is sorry I'm lame ; he calls me his "*po-o-r* little doggie"! We were running down stairs together, and he stepped on my foot. His foot's bigger than mine, — that's the way he came to do it. It's about as big as I am (but then I'm a little chap, and on that day I was a littler chap than ever from being starved so long).

He didn't mean to. I howled as loud as I could, and he said, "Oh! oh!" and picked me up in a great hurry, and ran up to my mistress. She took me in her lap, and my master stood over me and rubbed my foot. I cried all the time, and my mistress she cried too, and the baby brought me the button-string, and Bridget came up (without her broom), and looked at me and said, "Och! the poor little baste!" and I couldn't stand seeing everybody feel so badly, so I wagged my tail and made believe I'd been fooling.

But that very day I got a bone ; and I've had a good many since then.

My foot's got about well, now, but I shall limp a

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little yet, for if I don't I shan't be anybody's "poor little doggie," but a "miserable little wretch."

A good while later. — I forgot to keep on limping, and now I am a miserable little wretch, sure enough. I didn't know there could be such solemn times in the world. I thought no bones was bad enough, but this is worse.

When my master used to come home at night it meant fun ; he would lie down on the floor, and I would pretend he was a rat and go for him.

But things are changed.

One night, instead of playing rats, he stood me up on two legs in my mistress' chair, and told me to "*stay* there."

I thought it was part of the fun, and didn't mind him ; but he stood me up again. I suppose he thought that because I'd learned to walk on three legs I might be made to walk on two. But I dropped down again and wagged my tail as much as to say, "I prefer all fours, if it's the same to you."

But it wasn't the same to him. He took me to the corner of the room, and stood me up there.

I looked up at him sideways — out of one eye — to see if he meant it, but he scowled at me and said, "*Stan' up !*" (very stern).

Folly Frivolous.

I looked at him out of the other eye and winked, — to let him understand I didn't like the game. But he wouldn't take at all, and every time I dropped down he brought me up again with a jerk and cried, "*Stan' up ! up ! up !*"

My feelings were hurt ; and I know my back was. But pretty soon my mistress came along and said, "He's a little chap, — don't be too hard on him," and that stopped the game for that night. But the next day he wanted to play it again ; and the next ; and the next, — and every day after that.

I wonder if the baby had so hard a time learning to stand on two feet. I couldn't do it at all at first, I just doubled right up.

I get along a little better now, but it's tough work. I have to do it, though, on all occasions. I don't get a morsel of meat unless I stand up and bark for it, — begging they call it. (To think I should ever be reduced to that !)

I have to beg for my ball, and beg for the button-string, and beg for this, and beg for that, until life has got to be pretty much a burden.

Boo ! woo !



+ THE ARTIST AND THE BEAR.

FOUR long years the artist and I worked together and camped together, and rode side by side among the crags and the forests and the canons of the Rocky mountains. Night after night our blankets have been spread beside the camp-fire, sometimes we two alone, sometimes surrounded by three or four companions, but alone, or with a larger party, the artist and I have always been together.

Often, for days and weeks, we rode and worked and sketched and slept without seeing a single human being but the laboring men who were our "packers," and often, from the very loneliness of our surroundings, riding for hours through the great wilderness without exchanging a single word. Being so much together, and so much alone together I know the artist pretty well, and I know he is a brave, cool man, and

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this story is to be a story of his bravery and his coolness and one that will show something of what a lonely kind of a life is led away off among the great mountains of the West.

One night a little party of four of us were camped close up under the snow drifts which all summer long patch the mountain summits. The place of the camp was a little grassy valley just at the mouth of a deep cañon, and all surrounded by the heaviest kind of dark pine timber, and watered by a little stream not more than an hour away from its mother snow-drift. We were more than a hundred miles from the nearest house, and, lying that evening by our camp-fire, could distinctly hear now and then the crackling of a bush or dry branch, as some deer came stealing round to see what the great camp-fire blaze could mean, or what new kind of an animal it was which had come to keep him company in this lonely place.

Sometimes, too, a mule would give a startled snort as he smelled out the neighborhood of a prowling bear, for our faithful mules were good guards, and never let a bad intruder into camp without giving their warning.

Away off in so lonely a place, it is not strange that the party got to talking of Indians and bears, and telling stories we had heard or known some time of

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lights with one or with the other. There were especially a good many bear stories told, and more than one of the grizzly bear, and how, wounded by a rifle shot, he would often live long enough to kill or maim the hunter, or to cripple him for life. The fact was stated that the grizzly bear would often live for some seconds when shot clear through the heart ; and one story told where the bear and the hunter had been found side by side dead ; the death-shot of the bear not having killed him soon enough to save the poor man's life.

I remember lying there on my heavy overcoat, and meditating the chances of a single shot with my light rifle if a bear should attack me, and finally, I think, coming to the conclusion that, as I had not lost any bears, I had not better hunt much for them.

The artist sat on the ground close by me, cleaning his gun, and giving the lock now and then an ominous snap, as much as if he had thought, "I guess you are a pretty good bear gun ! I think I would like to try you on a grizzly just once, anyhow."

The artist had a new gun and a particularly fine one ; but he hadn't shot any thing with it for some time, and, though he did not say much, he evidently had made up his mind to shoot something pretty soon.

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After we had talked and told stories by the camp-fire light for an hour or two we all went off to sleep, and, sleeping soundly till the next morning woke up at daylight to find that it was raining a little, but in spite of it we determined to climb up one of the high mountains near us.

We were all pretty heavily loaded ; with our instruments, our big over-coats, our note-books, our rifles and field glasses. I remember the artist carried his army overcoat on one arm, his rifle on the other, while a geological hammer hung at his belt, and a field-glass and a sketch-book case were slung from his shoulders. During the day we all got separated, and were working round alone, and, though we saw and fired at several deer, all were too far off for us to hit them. As I said, we were all separated in the mountains, but, as we are particularly interested in the artist you and I will follow him, and leave the others to get back to camp as best they may.

As he worked and climbed along he was tempted so many times to shoot at distant or running deer, that when, late in the afternoon he left the mountain to come down to camp, he found himself the possessor of no game and only one cartridge.

It was still raining ; he was tired, wet, hungry, and, heavily loaded as he was, had still two miles through

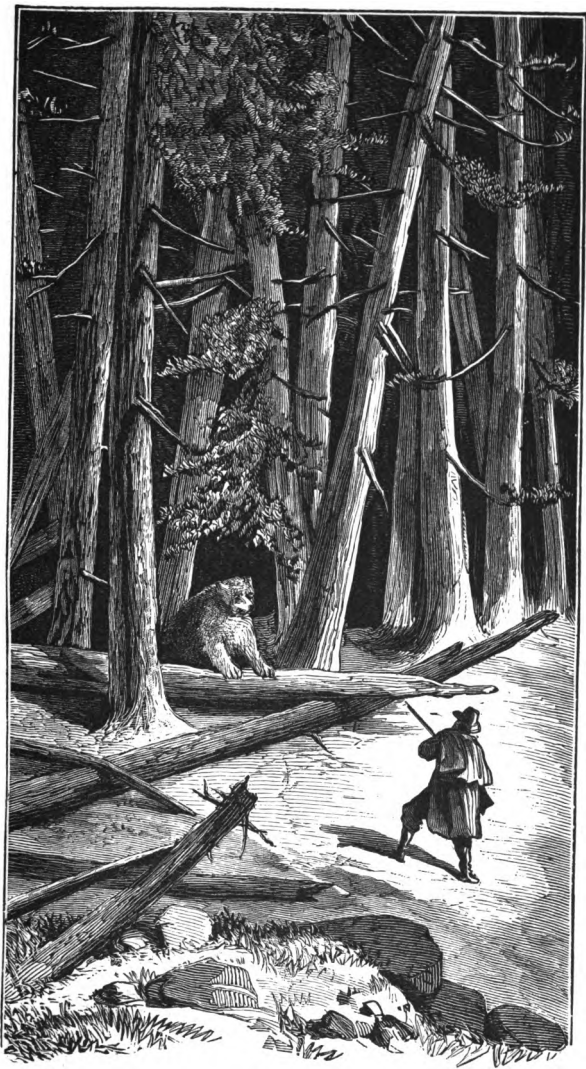
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the forest to walk before he would reach the camp-fire. It was not a pleasant prospect for a weary man, those last two miles at the end of a hard and rainy day, but as there was no help for it he started manfully out, and shoving, jumping, stumbling, he worked his way along.

He had already made about one half of the whole distance, and was grumbling to himself because he had seen and got no game all day. It was now almost night. The early twilight was rapidly deepening the forest darkness, the day noises were getting hushed, the little birds were just peeping out good-nights, the whole place getting more and more lonely and still, when, picking himself up from a tired man's uncertain stumble, he felt a shiver run through him, as, just ahead in his path he heard a deep, ominous growl. His eyes sought the direction of the sound, and there, not more than twenty or thirty feet away, he saw, above a heavy fallen log, the long humped back and waving fur of an unmistakable grizzly bear!

Do you wonder he was startled? away there alone in the wild cañon, hampered by his heavy load, and having in his possession only one cartridge to meet so formidable an adversary right in his very path! The artist is a cool man, but that tried his nerves.

However, Bruin did not give him long to think, but, raising himself with his forepaws on the log, he gave



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another challenging growl, and stared the artist in his face, those big jaws open, the eyes sparkling, and all the hair about his face erect with his anger and surprise at this intrusion. The artist stood there, too, so fixed with his astonishment that he hardly knew how to act. I do not believe that he was really frightened, for it is not easy to frighten him ; but he certainly did stand there a moment so fixedly that the bear evidently concluded he did not want anything to do with so foolish a fellow, and quietly dropping off the log he started to walk away.

By this time, though, the hunter's blood was up in the artist, and, moving quickly up two or three steps, he called out, " Boo ! boo ! "

Such impudence ! The bear turned round, and, trundling himself up to the log again, he raised at full height up over it, and looked down on his pigmy antagonist with a deep and angry growl. He stood there full breast towards the artist, towering above him like a disturbed giant as he was. This time the artist did not hesitate a moment, but, raising his gun deliberately, he aimed it at the animal's broad breast. Doubting then if the lock was set rightly he lowered the gun, and, resetting it, he coolly raised it to his shoulder, selected his mark, and carefully, slowly aiming, he fired.

The rifle's crash went echoing down the cañon, and

The Artist and the Bear.

before the smoke had cleared away the bear was tearing through the timber. Three or four jumps were all he made, and, pitching forward all was still. The hunter listened for a moment, but no noise was in the woods except the still evening chirpings. Then moving cautiously forward, he found the dead body of his grizzly bear stretched out upon the ground some thirty feet from the log where it had stood opposing him. The ball had gone through the animal, piercing both heart and lungs.

Our hunter did not stay by his fallen enemy long, but, satisfied that it was really dead he left it lying there, and hurried on through the forest in the growing darkness to the camp, and told us of his risky shot, and how his big dead bear was lying about a mile up the cañon. The artist was a proud and happy man that night, and very thankful too.

The next morning we helped him skin it, and carried the skin to camp to stretch and dry, and then he brought it with him East to have it dressed and trimmed; and to-night, as I sit here writing in our bachelor quarters, the artist sits opposite me at the table, and his grizzly bear-skin lies between us as a handsome rug, a trophy and a memento of the West.

FLAXIE FRIZZLE'S CRAZY CHRISTMAS.

LITTLE Red Riding Hood, where are you going ? ”

“Going to see my grandmother,” replied Flaxie Frizzle, peeping out from her scarlet hood. “And here’s a pat of butter for her in this wee, wee basket.”

“My dear Red Riding Hood, your grandmother is too sick to eat butter. Shut the door, walk very softly, and bring me my writing-desk. I’m going to write aunt Charlotte if she wants you at Hilltop.”

“O mamma, how elegant ! Is it ’cause grandma’s sick ? ” cried Flaxie, dropping the wee, wee basket, butter and all. She ought to have been ashamed to find she was so noisy that she had to be sent away from home ; but she never once thought about that !

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

"Oh, let me write it myself to Milly, please let me write it myself," she implored.

"Well, take off your cloak, pick up the things you've dropped, and you may."

The little girl obeyed her mother, then seized a postal card, ruled it down-hill with a pencil, and wrote on it a few cramped-up words, huddled close together like dried apples on a string :

"DEAR TWIN LITTLE COUSIN: My mamma is going to let me go to your house and go to school to your dear teacher, becaus I make to much noise and Grandma is sick with something in her back and Ime glad But not unless your Mamma is willing Wont you please to write and say so My lines are unstraight, and it is real too bad Good bye, FLAXIE FRIZZLE."

Mrs. Gray smiled when her little daughter asked how to spell *unstraight*, and she smiled again when she saw the card and read, "*Dear twin little cousin.*"

"Oh, I know better than that, truly, mamma," explained Flaxie blushing. "We're not twins a bit, and couldn't be if we should try ; and we've known it for quite a long time; but you see, mamma, we're *make-believing*, just for fun."

"I never saw such a child for 'make-believing,'"

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said Mrs. Gray, kissing Flaxie, who skipped gaily out of the room to pack her valise.

She always packed it if there was the least thing said about going away. She didn't mind the trouble, it was such a pretty valise — made of brown canvas, with leather straps like a trunk. And she knew aunt Charlotte *would* want her at Hilltop, for people always do want little girls, and can't have too many of them — and it was always best to be ready in season.

So she looked up her little umbrella, with "F. F." painted on it in white letters, her school-books that she had been playing school with all over the house, and a half-bushel or so of her best dolls. But as she did not go for a week, she had time to lose these things over and over, and some of them were never found any more.

"Now darling," said mamma, when Flaxie had bidden good-by to papa and Preston, and Ninny and the baby, and was just entering the car behind Mrs. Prim, "now darling, don't be troublesome to dear aunt Charlotte; and if you will learn to be good and orderly and sweet like your little cousin Milly, I shall be so glad."

Flaxie pondered upon this speech as she sat

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rattling along in the cars, munching peanuts, while Mrs. Prim took care of the shells.

"Troublesome? Oh my! 'Sif *I* ever troubled anybody! 'Cept Grandma Gray, and that's 'cause she's got something in her back. But mamma always thinks Milly is nicer than me! Queer what makes mammas *never* like their own little girls! Now aunt Charlotte thinks I'm the nicest. She scolds to Milly sometimes, but she don't scold to *ME*!"

It was a charming time to go to Hilltop, for Johnny had a new sled, and being the kindest of boys, was always ready to draw the twin cousins till they were half-frozen and begged him to stop; and I don't see how he *could* have been kinder than that!

Then the school was "perfickly elegant," taught by "that dear teacher with a beautiful soul." To be sure, Miss Pike had a red nose and such a large mouth that little Betty Allen called her "the lady that can't shut her face;" but what did that signify? For wasn't she just lovely, and didn't she save the school-house once when Flaxie and Milly set it on fire by mistake?

Now Flaxie loved the school and the teacher, but somehow she didn't study quite as well as usual, I am truly afraid. When she couldn't spell her lessons

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

she said, "It's 'cause you don't have the same books at Hilltop that we have where I live. You do spell the words so queer in your books!"

Aunt Charlotte observed that her own children played a good deal more after Flaxie came; and sometimes in the evening she was afraid the noise would disturb Mrs. Hunter, who lived in the other half of the double house.

"Oh, I like it," said Mrs. Hunter pleasantly; "but I should think, Mrs. Allen, you *would* be afraid of that little girl's pounding your piano in pieces."

But by and by, there wasn't so much time to play, for the busy season had begun, when everybody was making ready for Christmas; and the twin cousins had as much as they could do telling what they were *going* to do, as they sat in each other's lap and looked at their work-baskets.

Flaxie wanted to make a silk bed-quilt for her dear mamma out of pieces as big as a dollar; but finding there wouldn't be time, concluded to buy her a paper of needles, "if it didn't cost too much."

Probably there wouldn't have been anything done but talking, if aunt Charlotte hadn't brought out some worsteds and canvas, and set the helpless little ones at work upon a holder called "The Country

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

Cousin." They had a hard time over this young lady, and almost wished sometimes that she had never been born; but she came out very brilliant at last, in a yellow skirt, red waist and blue bonnet, with a green parasol over her head.

After this they had courage to make some worsted balls for the babies, some cologne-mats for their brothers who never used cologne, and some court-plaster cases for somebody else with the motto, "*I stick to you when others cut you.*"

Both the children were tired with all this, and Flaxie discovered, after her presents were packed to send off by express, that she didn't feel very well.

"My throat is so sore I can't *swoler*." So she wrote on a postal to her mother, for when she was sick she wanted everybody to know it.

Before aunt Charlotte heard of the sad condition of her throat, she had said she might go with Milly and Johnny, and some of the older children in the village, to see them trim the church. But when Flaxie came into the parlor with her teeth chattering, aunt Charlotte began to fear she ought not to go out.

"Are you so very chilly, my dear?"

"Yes'm, I am," replied Flaxie, with a doleful look round the corners of her mouth. "This house isn't

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

heated by steam like my house where I live, and I'm drefful easy to freeze ! ”

Aunt Charlotte looked anxious as she put on her bonnet before the glass. “ My child, you'd better not go to the church, for it's rather cold there.”

“ Cold as a barn,” put in Johnny.

“ O auntie, do please lemme go ! I'm cold, but it's a *warm* cold though,” said Flaxie eagerly, and her teeth stopped chattering.

“ I'm sorry, Flaxie, but there's a chill in the air like snow ; and if your throat is sore it is much wiser for you to stay at home,” said aunt Charlotte gently but firmly, like a good mother who is accustomed to be obeyed by her children.

And poor Flaxie was obliged to submit, though it cut her to the heart when Milly gave her a light kiss and skipped away ; and she did think it was cruel in aunt Charlotte to advise her to go into the nursery and stay with Nancy and the baby. She wished she had never said a word about her throat.

“ It don't feel any worse'n a mosquito-bite,” thought she, watching the gay party from the window — half a dozen ladies and as many children. “ It don't hurt me to swallow either,” swallowing her tears. “ Hilltop's such a queer place ! Not the

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

least speck of steam in any of the houses. If they had steam you could go anywhere if your throat *was* sore ! And I never saw anybody trim a church ; and, oh, Milly says they'll have beau-ti-ful flowers and crosses and things ! *I* never saw anybody trim *any-thing*—'cept a loaf of cake, and flowers on a bonnet."

Foolish Flaxie, to stand there winking tears into her eyes ! *You* would have known better ; *you* would have gone into the nursery to play with that lovely baby ; but there were times, I regret to say, when Flaxie really enjoyed being unhappy.

"Auntie *said* I might go, and then she wouldn't lemme ! Made me stay at home to play with that ole baby ! He's squirmy and wigglesome ; what do I want to play with *him* for ? When she *said* I might go ! I like good aunties. I don't like the kind that tell lies. "Oh, my throat *is* growing sore ; and I'm going up-stairs to stay in the cold and get sick, 'cause they ought to keep steam ; and *then* I guess auntie'll be sorry !"

I grieve to tell you this, for I fear you will not like a little girl who could be so very naughty.

When the happy party of church-trimmers came home at tea-time, there she was up-stairs in the "doleful dumps," and it was a long while before Milly could coax her down.

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When she came at last, her face was a sight to behold — all purple and spotted and striped — for a fit of crying always gave her the appearance of measles. She consented to take a seat at table, but ate little, said nothing, and gazed mournfully at her plate.

This distressed aunt Charlotte, but she asked no questions, and tried to keep Johnny talking, so he would not notice his broken-hearted little cousin.

"Now I *should* like to know what ails you," said Milly, as soon as tea was over.

"Got a *cricket* in my neck, can't move it a single speck," replied Flaxie, not knowing she had made poetry till Johnny, who was supposed to be ever so far off, began to laugh; and then she moved her neck fast enough, and shook her head and stamped her foot.

"Let's go in the nursery," said the peace-loving Milly. "I'm so sorry you're sick."

Flaxie had not meant to speak at all, but she could not help talking to Milly.

"Wish I's at home," said she reproachfully, "'cause my mamma keeps pep'mint."

"Why Flaxie, my mamma keeps it too. We've got lots and lots of it in the cupboard."

"Don't care if you have," snapped Flaxie, "I just despise pep'mint. It's something else I want, and

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

can't think of the name of ; but I know you don't keep it, for your papa isn't a doctor."

This was a cutting speech, and wounded her sweet cousin, as Flaxie knew it would do.

"Doctor Papa keeps littlish powders in blue and white papers, and one of the papers *buzzes* : I guess he'd give me that, but I don't know," added Flaxie crying harder than ever, though the tears felt like fire on her poor sore cheeks.

"You dear little thing," said aunt Charlotte, coming into the room with the baby, but putting him down and taking her naughty niece in her arms ; "you've been getting homesick all by yourself this long afternoon. Where did you stay?"

"Staid up-sta-irs," sobbed Flaxie.

"In the cold ? Why darling, what made you ? "

"You all went off and le-ef't me," said Flaxie, shaking with a little tempest of tears.

And then auntie understood it all—how this child, who was old enough to know better, had been rolling a little bit of trouble over and over, till it had grown into a mountain and almost crushed her. And the mother-heart in aunt Charlotte's bosom ached for poor foolish Flaxie.

"The little creature will suffer for this. I'm afraid



MILLY RESCUES FLAXIE FROM JOHNNY.

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she'll be sick," thought the good lady, sending for Nancy to bring some hot water and the tin bath-tub.

"I shall have you sleep with me to-night in the down-stairs room," said aunt Charlotte, "and I know you'll feel better for a flannel round your neck and poultices on your feet."

Flaxie smiled faintly as she saw the dried burdock leaves soaking in vinegar, for she liked to have a suitable parade made when she was sick. Besides, she had always wanted to sleep in the "down-stairs room," and was glad that uncle Ben happened to be gone; that is, as glad as she could be of anything.

But it was a miserable, forlorn world, nevertheless, to Flaxie, and she had never known such "a mean old night," even if it was "the night before Christmas." The lamp burning dimly in the corner of the room on the floor cast frightful shadows; her head ached; she woke the baby in the crib by crying, and then he woke everybody else.

It was "a mean old night" to the whole house as well as Flaxie; and when I say the *whole* house I mean both halves of it, for it was double, as I have said, or to use Flaxie's expression it was "twins." Mrs. Hunter lived in the other half; and about mid-

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night, when she was peacefully sleeping, her door-bell rang a furious peal. Nobody likes to hear such a sound at dead of night, and Mrs. Hunter trembled a little, but she rose and dressed as fast as possible and went down-stairs with a lamp.

"Who is it?" she asked through the keyhole.

"It's ME!" said a childish voice that she thought sounded like one of the Allen children.

She ventured to open the door, and there on the steps in the darkness, stood Flaxie Frizzle bare-headed, shivering and looking terribly frightened.

"O Mrs. Hunter, something *orful* has happened at our house—oh, come quick, Mrs. Hunter!"

"Yes, yes, dear, I'll go this minute; but what is it?" said the lady hurrying for her shawl.

"Auntie is crazy! She is running 'round and 'round with the tea-kettle."

Mrs. Hunter stood still in amazement. "Who sent *you* here?" said she. "Why don't they call the doctor?"

"I don' know. She's goin' to scald me to death, and I s'pose you know I'm sick," whined Flaxie, sinking down on the door-mat, where the light of the lamp shone full upon her, and Mrs. Hunter saw—what she might have seen before if she had not been so excited—that the child wore a checkered flannel

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

nightie, and her feet were done up in poultices.

"How could the child have got out of the house?" thought Mrs. Hunter. But the question was now, "How to get her back again?"

"Come, Flaxie," said she in a soothing tone, "let me wrap you up in a shawl and take you home pickapack — there's a good girl."

"But I don't want auntie to scald me!"

"She shan't, dear. If she has got the tea-kettle I'll take it away from her."

"Honest?" asked Flaxie piteously; but forgot her terror as soon as she was mounted pickapack, and thought herself the "Country Cousin" taking a ride on a holder.

All this while the other half of the house was up and hunting for the lost child. Milly was crying bitterly, Johnny had come in from the stable, where he had pulled the hay all over; and uncle Ben, just returned, was starting out on the street with a lantern.

Just then Mrs. Hunter walked in and dropped Flaxie into auntie's arms, saying, "Here, I've brought you a poor sick child."

Then there was such a commotion that Flaxie was more bewildered than ever, and at sight of uncle Ben she screamed wildly. It was his coming home

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

about ten minutes before that had frightened her in the first place by waking her from a bad dream ; and she had slipped out of bed and out of the open front door before any one missed her.

"There, there, darling, don't cry," said aunt Charlotte, hushing her in her arms, while Mrs. Hunter heated a blanket.

"I've done something *orful*," said Flaxie in her auntie's ear. "Don't tell! I stole a horse and sleigh and put 'em behind that door!"

"Never mind it, dear. You didn't mean to," said aunt Charlotte, smiling in spite of her heavy heart.

Then she turned to uncle Ben, who stood by, looking puzzled, and asked him in a whisper if he "didn't think he ought to go for the doctor?"

"Oh, by all means," said Mrs. Hunter beginning to help him on with his overcoat.

He had hurried home in the night train, on purpose to spend Christmas day with his family, and was really too tired to take a ride of two miles in a snow-storm. But he was not thinking of that ; he was thinking how dreadful it was to have his dear little niece sick away from home ; and how her papa didn't like the Hilltop doctor ; and perhaps it was best to go five miles to the next town for Dr. Pulsifer.

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"Yes, go for Dr. Pulsifer," said aunt Charlotte, when he asked her opinion, "and be quick as you can."

Flaxie knew nothing of all this. Her cheeks burned, her eyes shone, and she kept saying there were a million lions and tigers in the bed, and where was the rat-trap?

"Do bring the rat-trap," said she plunging about in a fright. "Oh, you don't hear, do you? — There's a woman out in the other room eating peas — eating and eating — why don't you stop her? — Oh, you don't hear! Johnny Allen, run for a sponge and vinegar, and put it in auntie's ears, so she can hear!"

Milly laughed at these strange speeches, till she heard Nancy say to Mrs. Hunter, "Crazy as a loon, ain't she? I'm afraid it's a slim chance for her."

Milly couldn't imagine what a "slim chance" was, but there was something in Nancy's tone that appalled her, and she ran into the pantry and cried behind the flour barrel:

"If Flaxie Frizzle dies I want to die too. She's the only twin cousin I've got in the world."

In a short time, considering how far he had ridden, uncle Ben came home, but without Dr. Pulsifer, who had gone away and could not be there before to-morrow noon.

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"I'm so disappointed," said aunt Charlotte, looking pale and sick enough herself to be in bed. "But the poor little thing is asleep now, and perhaps she isn't so very sick after all. Do tell me if you think there's any danger of brain fever?"

"Well, I think this," replied uncle Ben, leaning over the bed and taking a long look at the little patient: "I think *I* don't know anything about it! It may be common sore throat and it may be diphtheria; but if she isn't better in the morning we'll telegraph to her father. A child that can turn yellow and pea-green as she did last spring is capable of anything."

"That is true — one never knows what she will do next," said auntie. And then she looked at Flaxie and sighed.

It was wonderful what a power she had — this little pink and white girl — of keeping her friends in a worry! Once she had fallen into a brook, and once into a well, besides falling sick times without number.

Uncle Ben and aunt Charlotte knew all this, but they did not happen to know it was a very common thing for Flaxie to be crazy! It was just so with her brother Preston, and her sister "Ninny;" they seldom had any little ailment, even a bad cold, without

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

"going out of their heads," and nobody in the family minded it at all.

If Flaxie's mother had been at Hilltop, she would have sent uncle Ben and aunt Charlotte to bed ; but as she was not there, they sat up all night watching their queer little niece.

Rather a sorry "Christmas eve" all around the house ; but a glorious Christmas morning, and not a cloud in the sky. Flaxie woke as gay as a lark, without the least recollection of the horrors she had suffered in the night from tigers and tea-kettles.

"Wish you Merry Christmas !" cried she to pale aunt Charlotte, and sprang out of bed with poultices on her feet to go after her Christmas stocking.

"Well, well, is *this* the little girl they thought was so sick last night?" said Dr. Pulsifer, when he arrived at noon, and found the twin cousins lying on the rug with a pair of twin dolls between them, dressed just alike, and each with a fur cap on its head. He felt Flaxie's pulse and looked at her tongue, and said he shouldn't "waste any of his nice medicines on *her*."

"But my cold isn't good at all, now honest ; and my throat's a little sore I guess," said Flaxie, drawing a long face and feeling rather ashamed not to

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

be sick now, when the doctor had been sent for on purpose !

"Never mind ! If you don't need me your aunt does. What think of yourself, you little piece of mischief, running away nights and frightening people so that they are sick abed Christmas day ?"

All Flaxie's good time was over in a minute. *Was* auntie sick abed up-stairs, and was that why Flaxie hadn't seen her since morning ?

"Oh, mayn't I go look at her ?" she begged after the doctor had left ; and uncle Ben said "Yes, if she wouldn't stay but a minute."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I do love you dearly," cried Flaxie, climbing upon the bed and cuddling close to the white auntie. "*Did* I make you sick ? I didn't mean to ; and I don't 'member about the tea-kettle —"

"There, there, dear, don't cry," said poor aunt Charlotte, closing her eyes.

"I oughtn't to stayed up-stairs yesterday in the cold and tried to be sick," went on Flaxie, determined to free her mind. "That was the wickedest thing. But you were just as good as you could be, auntie, if you *did* trim the church ; and I'll never do so again !"

"Oh, hush, dear, you shake the bed."

"I'm real bad in here, in my so-oul," wailed

Flaxie Frizzle's Crazy Christmas.

Flaxie squeezing her eyelids together tight and laying her hand on her stomach ; "why don't God make me beautiful inside o' my soul?"

"Ask him, dear child."

"Will He?" said Flaxie earnestly. "Oh, yes, I know;" and her eager face fell. "But he'll have to make me homely to do it — just like Miss Pike."

"Oh, no, my child."

"'Cause I'm willing to be a little homely, now honest, if I can have a nice so-o-ul," added the child, with a true and deep feeling of her own naughtiness, that I am sure the angels must have been glad to see.

But she was shaking the bed again, and uncle Ben drew her gently away, and took her down-stairs in his arms, to finish her "Crazy Christmas."

+ WHY THE BENEDICT FAMILY DID NOT GO TO THE CONCERT.

THE whole family had planned to go. Even little Annita had been promised to be allowed to go, with the strict understanding that she was to sit quite still, and hold up her head and not go to sleep. Of course she could do all this she meant to show them, so she just sat down in her own little chair, and sat perfectly still for five seconds. "There," cried she, jumping up again. "Can't I, can't I? I guess I've had a birf-day, and I'm not a baby at all!"

But Annita did not go to the concert, nor did any of the family. I think they would have gone, if Annita had not made mud pies that afternoon, or if they had not used silver-plated knives altogether for the table, or if they had not had strawberries for tea.

You see Annita could not be cured of making mud-

Why the Benedict Family did not go to the Concert.

pies. "Time will cure her," said her father contentedly, hunting for a decently clean spot on Annita's face to kiss. One does not like to kiss dirt, even on the face of one's own child. But Annita's mother and sisters were not satisfied to wait for the time-cure, thinking of the washing and the dirty face and hands. Above all, thinking of the carving knife. That was the greatest trouble. For mud pies cannot be made without a knife to dig dirt with, and Annita never returned the knives she borrowed. So one after another of the kitchen knives went out to the mud pie bakery, and never came in again. At last there was left only the carving knife, and the plated table knives which could not be borrowed, being wisely kept on the top shelf of the china closet, a region Annita had never been able to explore.

Tea was ready at six o'clock, all except cutting the bread, the cheese, and some cold ham. Then the carving knife could not be found, and Florence Benedict who had been preparing tea went out to look for it. The bakery had been moved, and so, evidently, had the knife, for it was no where to be seen. Then Annita had to be found, of course. She was under the large fir tree in the front yard, dressing a dolly.

"Where is the carving knife, Annita?" asked Florence.

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"I know where it is," said Annita without looking up.

"Well, where?" asked Florence. "Tell me quick, dear."

"Well — it's — only a little kind o' lost, Florence," said Annita, gravely. "It's up in the garret, or else it's down cellar, or else out by the barn, or else in the



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front yard, or the back one, or — or — ahind the wood-pile."

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"Good gracious! Annita, do you suppose I can go to all those places in a hurry, and tea waiting? Come and help me find it."

"But I am 'fraid Charlotte Henrietta will be spoiled if I leave her."

"Oh! that old doll, without any head or legs or arms, no she won't, dear. Come along and help me!" said Florence.

Annita slowly left her play and began to look for the knife with Florence.

Just then Hattie came out to ask why tea was not served; but seeing her sisters hunting she also joined in the search at once. A few minutes later, Johnny, being hungry (Johnny was always hungry), came out to help the girls. When Mrs. Benedict saw them all wandering about through the shrubbery, looking intently at the grass, she knew immediately what had happened, so she came out and began to look too.

Sam and Henry came along just then, and as these family promenades in search of the carving knife had often been taken before, they knew just what was wanted, and also that they could have no tea until the knife was found. So they joined in the search though I do not think their help would ever have found anything, for Sam had new boots and had to look at them most of the time, and Henry, whose

Why the Benedict Family did not go to the Concert.

name was William Henry Harrison, and who was to be a celebrity, turned round and round in the garden walk and scratched his head. That was the way he always hunted his hat.

It was not long before Mr. Benedict came in through the front gate, bringing some boxes of strawberries for tea. These he put down on the piazza, in order to help the rest find the knife. Of course, everybody looked in the same spot. Annita and Florence went out to a bare spot on the north side of the house where the bakery was generally located, and hunted carefully, but the knife was not to be seen. Then Mrs. Benedict, knowing how carelessly the children always looked, followed them. Mr. Benedict could not think of any place else to look, so he followed his wife. Then Sam and Henry, thinking there must be some reason for everybody looking there, came and looked too. So it happened that the whole family began to follow each other in a circle, hunting over the same places.

At seven o'clock, Mr. Benedict looked at his watch.

"Well, I don't see," said he, "but that we must give up the search, and go in to tea." So the family followed each other into the dining room. The tea was still on the stove to keep hot, and the milk and but-

THE WHOLE FAMILY BEGAN TO FOLLOW EACH OTHER, HUNTING OVER THE SAME GROUNDS.



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ter in the ice chest to keep cool. There was nothing but dishes and sugar on the table.

"What shall we eat?" asked Mrs. Benedict.

"That is true," said Mr. Benedict. "One cannot eat sugar alone. Perhaps we had best find the knife." So the search began again.

At eight o'clock Mr. Benedict again looked at his watch.

"It is now too dark to find the knife without a lantern, and ours we lent to Uncle Job, last week."

"Then let us go in to supper," said Mrs. Benedict. "To tea, mamma," suggested Hattie. "You know there is nothing to eat but tea and sugar and milk."

"And butter," added Johnny, who never was known to forget the butter.

"There are also some strawberries on the front piazza," said Mr. Benedict.

"Hattie and Florence, you will have to hull them first," said their mother. The family sat down in the sitting-room, where Mrs. Benedict had lighted a lamp, to await the strawberries. It was a large family, and Mr. Benedict had provided four boxes.

"One does not like to be able to count his strawberries," said he, by way of apology for the extravagance.

Of course it took the girls a great while to hull so

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many strawberries. At nine o'clock the family sat down to tea. There was not much to eat, to be sure, only tea and strawberries, but these last were delicious, and, luckily, in reasonable abundance, and as all were hungry it was ten o'clock when they rose from the table. Mr. Benedict looked at his watch.



ONE OF ANNITA'S DOLLS.

"I think we will not go to the concert this evening," said he. "Annita is already asleep, and, as the tea things are to be cared for, it might be too late when all were ready.

The girls were greatly disappointed, and so was Sam, on account of his new boots.

The next morning, when Johnny went to the pas-

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ture with the cow, he found one of Annita's dolls, very straight and very stiff looking, standing up straight in the ground near the pasture bars. It had a smooth ivory face, without eyes, nose or mouth. On taking off its clothes, it proved to be the carving knife.

"I told you 't was only a little kind o' lost," said Annita.

A GREAT WOMAN.

MANY of the readers of the *Wide Awake* have doubtless seen Tom Thumb, and his little wife and friends. Not so many of them, perhaps have seen persons who are as much larger than average human beings as Tom Thumb is smaller. Shall I tell them about a woman of unusual stature, who once lived in the state of Maine? She may be living at this time, for it was not many years ago that I saw her, and she was then not middle-aged; and, as she was somewhat sensitive regarding her remarkable size, perhaps it would be as well not to give her real name, but simply to call her Sylvia, since she was born and brought up in the country.

When I saw Sylvia, she was probably not more than thirty-five years old. She must have been then nearly seven feet tall, and was said to have grown a little within a year or two before. My young friends

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will better realize what it is to be nearly seven feet high when I tell them that when Sylvia sat in a high-backed rocking-chair, in which if a tall man sat his head would just reach to the top of the back, you could go behind her and put your fingers across the top and under her arm ; or she could easily sit in it, with her elbow resting on the back, and her hand supporting her cheek, as other people lean an elbow on the arm of the chair in which they sit.

Yet Sylvia had been a very little baby — even smaller than usual. She was one of twins, and they were both so very small that in the night, when the babies were in bed with their papa, who was not at all a large man, he turned over in his sleep and crushed one of the poor babies to death without knowing it.

But either he was so shocked at what he had done that he was more careful in future, or the mother took the precaution to save her other baby by putting it to sleep out of his reach ; for Sylvia, the small twin that was left, managed to get through her babyhood without being mashed by her papa. She was always small of her age, and a delicate little thing, and did not begin to take on unusual proportions until she was as old as other girls are when they cease growing. Instead of stopping when she was seventeen or

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eighteen years old, as most girls do, she simply kept on growing and growing, for ten or a dozen years longer, just as fast as children grow. She was never fat or plump, but had the rather meagre habit which children have who grow rapidly.

When she was twenty-two or three years old she fell on the icy door-step and broke her arm. The doctor who set it was astonished to find that the bones were yet soft like a little child's, instead of firm and hard, like a grown person's; and this softness of the bones seemed to continue until she stopped growing.

Sylvia's parents were poor people, and by the time she was a woman they were growing old, and she was obliged to do something for their support as well as her own. She could not work any faster, or earn any more, because of her superior size; in fact, it is not strange if she did not feel so strong and well as other girls, since so much of her force went toward growing. She used to go out among the villagers and townspeople and nurse sick people and take care of little young babies; she was a very careful and tender nurse, and I have heard it said that when she was holding a little baby, instead of taking it on her arm, as most of us do, she laid it on one of her hands with its head toward her finger-ends, and its little feet

A Great Woman.

along her wrist, and in this great, warm, loving hand, as in a cozy cradle, the little creature would go comfortably to sleep without a thought of how exceedingly funny it was, to be thus literally held in the hollow of one's hand.

Everybody loved Sylvia, not because she was a great woman, but because she was always kind, and gentle, and helpful ; and even the rude boys in the street, who were sometimes tempted to shout and jeer at her, because it was so droll to see a woman so much larger than any man in town, were generally polite to her ; partly because they knew how easily she could pick them up and toss them over the fence if she chose, and partly, perhaps, because most of them remembered how kind and patient she had been when some of their friends were sick, or when their mothers needed help.

Once Sylvia went to help a farmer's wife who had more work on her hands than she could do alone. Sylvia was not only handy and faithful, but she was by this time unusually strong and capable of doing hard work. One evening she had been straining the milk into big pans in the kitchen — they used big, heavy, brown, earthen pans, not often seen in cities, — and she started to carry them down cellar. So she took up a pan, holding nine or ten, perhaps twelve

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quarts of new milk, and went toward the cellar door.

Now this was an old-fashioned kitchen, and had in the ceiling overhead a row of hooks which were made to hold long poles for the purpose of drying apples, pumpkins, and other things. Ordinary people were obliged to stand in chairs in order to reach these poles, and the drying apples were quite out of the way above people's heads. But Sylvia was not an ordinary woman; and as there were at this time no poles in the hooks she forgot about them, and as she passed too close to one it caught in her hair and held her fast. The poor woman could not raise her hand to her head to free herself, because both hands were steadying the great pan, swimming-full of milk; she could not even move her head back and forward to try and unhitch it, because such shaking would spill the milk on the nice, white kitchen-floor which she had just scoured; and there was no one but herself in the house at the time, as the farmer was in the barn-yard with his cattle, and his wife had stepped into a neighbor's house.

So poor Sylvia could do nothing but stand and wait, and occasionally give a faint call for help; for surely no one could shout very loud, with her head caught up by the hair, and her whole attention en-

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gaged in holding without spilling a heavy pan of milk. More than half an hour passed before poor Sylvia was liberated from her painful predicament ; and even when the farmer, coming in for another milk pail, discovered her sad plight, he laughed so immoderately at the affair that it took him a long time to free her. In fact, it was said that he did not know what to do first, and actually went to the neighbor's to call his wife, without thinking to relieve poor Sylvia first, by taking the pan from her aching hands.

By and by, Mr. Barnum, the showman, heard in some way of Sylvia, and he at once sent an agent to see her, and try to hire her to come to his museum in Boston as a curiosity. Now poor Sylvia was just as averse to being stared at as you or I would be ; she could not bear to be set up for a show and have all manner of people looking at her and making remarks about her broad shoulders, and her large hands, so at first she refused.

But her parents were getting old, and she could not obtain by her poorly-paid labor many little comforts which she knew they needed ; and, moreover, she had greater expenses than most country women, since it took so many yards of cloth to make her garments. All her friends and acquaintances joined in telling her that it was really her duty to accep

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Mr. Barnum's offer, which was a great deal more money than Sylvia had ever earned or seen in her life ; and so, finally, after many tears, she decided to go.

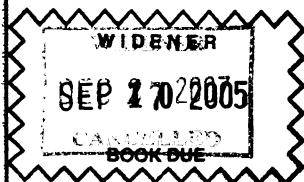
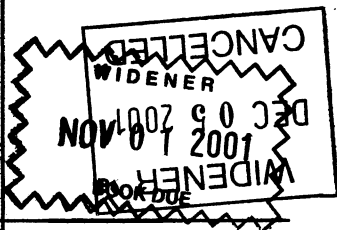
Of course Sylvia could never buy anything ready made, as she could never find any garments large enough. All her "things," excepting shawls and handkerchiefs, had to be made on purpose for her, shoes, stockings, and all. She had always been obliged to wear knitted gloves or go bare-handed ; but when she was going to Boston for the first time in her life she thought she ought to have a pair of kid gloves. She searched in all the stores and sent all over the country, hoping to find a pair of men's gloves which she could wear ; but none large enough could be found, either of kid, silk or cotton, and poor Sylvia was obliged to go to Boston with a pair of home-made gloves.

Mr. Barnum treated Sylvia very kindly, but he made the most of her size, wishing her to wear high head-dresses and high-heeled boots, which added greatly to her gigantic appearance, and, in consequence, she looked a great deal larger in Boston than she ever had looked in Maine. She was a good woman, and she was undeniably a great woman.

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